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DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG
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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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SUBJECT: TURABI LOVES THE ICC, HATES NCP'S DARFUR PLANS

¶1. SUMMARY: On October 14, Hassan al-Turabi held a press conference at the Popular Congress Party (PCP)'s Khartoum headquarters and formally announced that the PCP will boycott participation in the Sudan People's Initiative plan for peace in Darfur. END SUMMARY.

¶2. With his characteristic zeal, Turabi spoke for two hours to an outdoor crowd of journalists at his party's headquarters in Khartoum's Riyadh neighborhood. Repeatedly lambasting the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) with verbal jabs, he slammed the Sudan People's Initiative (SPI) as well as the Qatari and Arab League's plans for Darfur. He began the press conference by announcing that the PCP had not been consulted on any of the planning regarding the SPI, and would therefore refuse the government's invitation to attend the plan's formal unveiling on Thursday, October 16.

¶3. Turabi chided the Arab League's efforts on Darfur as defunct and laughed off the SPI as "just a social event, not a proposal for solving the Darfur issue." On the Qatari initiative, Turabi proclaimed that "the Americans and Europeans seek the truth about Darfur and talk to IDPs... the Qataris just meet with the NCP." He also declared that the Democratic Unionist Party (some factions), the Umma Party (again, some factions), and the Sudanese Communist Party would be joining the PCP in boycotting the SPI.

¶4. Turning to the International Criminal Court (ICC), Turabi seemed to take delight in the body's recent actions and the regime's reactions in order to attempt to meet the demands of the P-3 (and especially France) by arresting ICC indictee Ali Kushayb. Dismissing Kushayb as "simply a scapegoat for Bashir," Turabi rejoiced that "nothing can protect the president and the NCP from the ICC, not even the Sudan People's Initiative." With a smug smile, he noted that "[ICC Chief Prosecutor] Ocampo's case is strong."

¶5. Seemingly without a sense of irony for a man who came to power in a 1989 National Islamic Front coup d'etat, Turabi concluded the press conference by stating that "elections should not be delayed," and that "freedom of expression was essential" for all Sudanese. He mentioned that several prominent PCP leaders have been arrested and sent to Kobar jail (where many political prisoners, including Turabi himself from 2004 to 2005, are held) for "no known crimes."

¶6. COMMENT: Turabi's statements reaffirmed his role as the most outspoken member of the opposition in Sudan. Unlike the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the PCP is not bound by a political alliance to publicly defend the NCP when it comes to the subject of ICC indictments. Hoping to humiliate President Bashir, Turabi's brazen remarks showed again that he is not afraid of making a public show of the NCP's precarious political position.

ASQUINO